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SUBJECT: ISLAMIC OUTREACH IN NIGERIA

REF: A. HEINBECK-FAHEY E-MAIL OF 11/17

- [1](#)B. ABUJA 02014
- [1](#)C. ABUJA 02013
- [1](#)D. ABUJA 01890
- [1](#)E. ABUJA 01271
- [1](#)F. ABUJA 01270
- [1](#)G. STRATEGY PAPER ON ISLAMIC OUTREACH IN AFRICA

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) Recognizing the importance of improving our relationships with and understanding of Muslims in Nigeria, the U.S. Mission in Nigeria incorporates engagement with Muslim communities as part of our daily work. As roughly half of Nigeria's population is Muslim, many of the interlocutors of Embassy Abuja and Consulate General Lagos involve members of the Muslim community. Mission personnel regularly discuss religious freedom with the Nigerian Government (GON) as part of overall efforts to promote human rights and improve inter-religious relations. The Ambassador and Mission staff play active roles in discussing and advocating these issues with government, religious, civil society, private sector, and traditional leaders. Designated officers in Abuja and Lagos retain responsibility for integrating Muslim Outreach into other Embassy activities. Staff regularly travel to northern Nigeria, which has a predominately Muslim population. This report provides information on the Mission's recent (since July 2009), ongoing, and planned (through March 2010) outreach initiatives and supplements information provided earlier via ref A. Please see reftels E and F for details on earlier initiatives. END SUMMARY.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

[1](#)2. (U) Mission provides the following information on recent Muslim outreach initiatives:

-- On August 26, the Consul General hosted an Iftar dinner to commemorate the month of Ramadan. Guests included traditional rulers, Muslim clerics, political leaders, diplomats, journalists, representatives of Islamic civic groups, Muslim staff of Consulate General Lagos, and alumni of USG-sponsored exchange programs. Guests commended Mission Nigeria and President Obama for fostering peace, friendship, mutual respect, and better understanding between Americans

and the Muslim world.

-- On September 24, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of Consulate General Lagos collaborated with the Center for Inter-Religious Relations in Africa, the Islamic Network for Development, the Youth and Gender Network, and the Organization for Non-Formal Education Foundation to commemorate World Peace Day. Five guest speakers presented papers on peaceful co-existence and inter-religious dialogue, followed by a question and answer session. The 115 guests also participated in small group discussions about the causes of conflict and ways of promoting peace and tolerance in Nigeria.

-- From October 8 to 11, PolOff accompanied Special Representative Farah Pandith to meetings in Abuja, Kaduna, and Kano with Nigerian religious leaders, civil society activists, and government officials to promote person-to-person engagement with diverse Muslim communities. (Please see reftel D for details on Special Representative Pandith's visit.)

-- On October 17, U.S. Mission personnel and volunteers from the Jos inter-faith community cleaned and refurbished basketball and volleyball courts at the Dadin Kowa Peace Zone Qbasketball and volleyball courts at the Dadin Kowa Peace Zone Recreation Center. Several "Peace Clubs," consisting of Christian and Muslim youth from local neighborhoods, regularly use the Center's facilities as part of a program to reduce violence by integrating youth of different religious and ethnic groups into sports activities. A program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

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supports these "Peace Clubs."

-- From October 20 to 23, PolOffs traveled to Maiduguri, Borno State, where they met with religious leaders and academics to better understand the causes of violence and to identify communities that may be most vulnerable to recruitment by extremists. They expressed condolences to the Deputy Governor of Borno and the Shehu of Borno for the loss of lives during the Boko Haram attacks and distributed commemorative digital videos and transcripts of President Obama's speeches to students at the University of Maiduguri, a reported recruiting ground for members of Boko Haram. (Please see reftels B and C for details on PolOffs' trip to Maiduguri.)

-- On November 12, USAID signed a \$40 million, five-year cooperative agreement with Research Triangle Institute to implement the Mission's new local governance program, "Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Development (LEAD). The project, which will initially operate in Sokoto and Bauchi states, will build the capacity of local government councilors and chairpersons, staff, and other selected state government authorities to plan and manage budgets and to evaluate and improve fiscal and administrative tasks.

-- From November 16 to 20, PolOff and Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) staff traveled to Borno State. They met with students and security personnel and visited a school supported by the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program, damaged in the Boko Haram attacks. (Embassy will report details via septel.)

-- Mission Defense Department personnel from the OSC and Civil Military Support Element (CSME) recently completed several humanitarian assistance projects in predominately Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria including: construction of a health education center in Niger state; renovation of medical clinics in Niger and Borno States; donations of adaptive eye wear and excess medical property in Niger and Borno States; renovation of an Intensive Care Unit in Kano; and construction of medical waste incinerators for hospitals in Kano, Jigawa, and Katsina States.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

13. (SBU) Mission provides the following information on ongoing outreach initiatives:

-- The Mission supports the "Greetings from America" radio program featuring the experiences of Muslim and Christian Nigerian high school and college students studying in the United States. The program is syndicated on several radio stations throughout northern Nigeria, including the Kano-based Voice of America affiliate, Freedom Radio.

-- The Mission supports job skills development training grants, totaling 85,000 U.S. dollars, for Muslim women in Abuja and Kaduna.

-- PAS administers the Youth Exchange Program (YES) in eight Northern States. The \$1.8 million program provides high-school students with the opportunity to study one academic year in Iowa. Upon return, many YES alumni have become involved in improving living conditions and governance in their communities.

-- PAS administers the English Access Micro-Scholarship Program in Kaduna, Kano, and Bauchi States. This program provides 40 underprivileged, high-school students with opportunities to study English, thereby improving their future educational and employment prospects.

-- PAS administers the International Visitors' Leadership Program (IVLP), providing opportunities for an average of 40 Nigerian future leaders to learn more about the United States through personal experience. The IVLP exposes potential leaders to U.S. professional counterparts, institutions, policies, culture, and values. Visitors return from these three-week programs with a broad and positive understanding

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of the United States, which produces a multiplier effect within Nigeria. Between July 2009 and March 2010, eight Muslims from Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, and Zamfara States will have participated in the IVLP.

-- The Fulbright Foreign Language Assistant Program currently sponsors a secondary school teacher from Sokoto, who teaches Hausa language and culture at Michigan State University. The program promotes the exchange of cultural values to establish mutual understanding.

-- The Fulbright Junior Staff Development program sponsors four Muslim participants from Kaduna, Kano, and Kwara States involved in doctoral research in U.S. universities. The program exposes participants to standard research facilities and the latest journals in their areas of specialization, with the goal of having them return to Nigeria as better teachers and researchers who will share their U.S. experiences with colleagues and promote a better understanding of U.S. society, culture, and education system.

-- PAS personnel established American Corners operations in regional centers across Nigeria to support outreach and program activities. American Corners operating in cities with significant Muslim populations include those in Abuja, Maiduguri, Kano, Bauchi, Jos, and Sokoto.

-- To enhance communications and relations with interlocutors in the North, Embassy Abuja offers a weekly Hausa language course for interested personnel.

-- In 2006, USAID established Conflict Mitigation and Management Regional Councils (CMMRC) in Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers, and Delta States under the Conflict

Abatement through Local Mitigation (CALM) Program, implemented by the International Foundation for Education and Self Help (IFESH). CMMRCs serve as the hub for responding to episodic, communal, ethnic, religious, and other ongoing conflicts in their respective states. They implement their activities in collaboration with various implementing partners as well as with state and local officials. While all Councils can collect and analyze data, they often lack systematic approaches to working with government or security agencies to act proactively against potential outbreaks. USAID personnel are helping the Councils to establish early warning systems and response protocols.

-- The Inter-faith Engagement, a pilot program supported by USAID, strengthens community dialogue and reconciliation through the Inter-faith Mediation Centre (IMC), actively engaged in management of inter-religious conflicts.

-- USAID's Civil Society Advocacy, Awareness, and Empowerment program strengthens the capacity of civil society organizations, transforming them into more effective advocates for their issues.

-- USAID's Maximizing Agricultural Revenues and Key Enterprises in Target Sites (MARKETS) project helps increase agricultural productivity in several Northern States, including Kano and Kaduna.

-- The USAID-supported Micro-Finance Services Program introduces innovative micro-finance solutions to under-served markets in Northern Nigeria.

-- The USAID-supported Teacher Training Initiative supports curriculum development and recruitment of female teacher training candidates in three Northern States. Qtraining candidates in three Northern States.

-- USAID supports several health programs throughout Northern Nigeria including: dissemination of sexual and reproductive health information; immunization campaigns; net distribution and malaria treatment awareness; ante-natal and newborn care training; and HIV-AIDS prevention and treatment programs.

-- The Department of Defense sponsors health research programs and HIV-AIDS testing and prevention programs throughout Northern Nigeria.

-- Volunteers from the Mission use their personal time to

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develop curriculum and teach various skills in the African School of Excellence and the extended Old Waterboard Community in Suleja, about an hour from Abuja. The Mission's Physician's Assistant recently led a team that organized a health education dialogue about breast cancer. The session, sponsored by the Bluffton, South Carolina, Chapter of the American Cancer Society, informed participating women and girls about the importance of regular breast examinations. Mission volunteers plan to discuss menopause and eyesight care and host soccer lessons in December.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

14. (U) Mission provides the following information on planned initiatives through March 2010:

-- During the next four months, Mission Nigeria will engage several Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria. The Ambassador, for example, will travel in December to Katsina, Kebbi, and Sokoto States, where she will speak at Katsina University to follow up themes from the President's Cairo speech, meet with students and university leaders at the American Corner in Sokoto, and discuss polio eradication efforts and U.S. assistance with religious leaders, including the Sultan of Sokoto.

-- PolOffs plan to travel to Katsina State in December to meet with religious leaders and host a round-table discussion for youth, to Sokoto and Kebbi States in January 2010 to meet with religious leaders and host roundtable discussions for women and youth, and to Bauchi State in March 2010 to meet with religious leaders and host a roundtable discussion for youth.

-- In January 2010 Consulate General Lagos plans to host a luncheon for religious leaders, including Muslim scholars and clerics.

-- The Mission's Northern Education Initiative will focus on strengthening basic-education service-delivery systems in several Northern States. USAID is currently seeking an implementing partner.

-- In February 2010, the Mission will host National Day receptions in Abuja and Lagos. Guests for both events will include Muslim government officials, politicians, business leaders, civil society activists, religious leaders, and academics. Besides the reception, activities will include cultural and education events sponsored by various Mission departments, including outreach to Muslim communities.

-- OSC and AID plan jointly to design a new inter-faith program called Training of Leaders on Religious and National Coexistence (TOLERANCE). The Inter-faith Mediation Centre (IMC) will implement this program to support durable inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue to encourage tolerance and peaceful co-existence among Nigeria's diverse religious and ethnic groups. The IMC office will operate in Kaduna on a street between Muslim and Christian neighborhoods that has equal numbers of Muslim and Christian residents.

-- The OSC and CMSE plan to complete the following humanitarian assistance projects, assuming approval by the Africa Command project manager: donation of excess property to a school and the Suleja Hospital in Kano; renovation of the Government Girls' Arabic Secondary School in Kano; construction of an in-patient ward for Sheikh Muhd Jidda Qconstruction of an in-patient ward for Sheikh Muhd Jidda General Hospital in Kano; renovation of the Tudan Maliki Special Education School in Kano; construction of an in-patient ward and latrines for Bagwai District Medical Hospital in Katsina; bore-hole construction for the Rinjin Gaiya School in Katsina; and construction of a medical waste incinerator for the Barau Dikko Specialist Hospital in Kaduna.

SENSITIVITIES AND CHALLENGES

15. (SBU) In implementing Islamic Outreach activities, the Mission has identified the following sensitivities and

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challenges:

-- Political competition and manipulation, weak security infrastructure and governance institutions, resource competition, and ethnic and religious tensions continue to fuel violent conflicts throughout Nigeria. Authorities have often responded ineffectively or slowly to violations of religious freedom and sectarian conflicts. Violence, tension, and hostility between Christians and Muslims occur with some frequency. Therefore, Mission Nigeria attempts to balance its outreach between Muslim and Christian communities and places priority on mitigating conflicts and promoting inter- and intra-religious respect.

-- Travel to many parts of the predominately Muslim North is particularly difficult due to long distances, poor roads and infrastructure, and security concerns. Mission Nigeria supports the opening of a new Consulate in Kano to promote

U.S. interests and enhance mutual understanding and respect through increased contact with Muslim populations in the North. A permanent presence there would ease travel and access to other points in the Northern States and enhance the sustainability and impact of our programs.

-- The Mission currently has only one language-designated position, despite the status of Hausa as the predominant, spoken language in the North. The Mission would benefit from additional language training for officers before arrival at post.

-- With additional funding and space, the Mission could conduct additional, targeted, grass-roots programming. The Mission, however, lacks support (ICASS) personnel and office space to increase the number of U.S. direct-hire personnel in Nigeria.

16. (U) Embassy collaborated on this telegram with ConGen Lagos.
SANDERS